

UNLEASHING GOD'S TRUTH ONE VERSE AT A TIME

# DYNAMIC RESOURCES

*“To convince a man that God can give hope,  
I need to show him a man with hope. To convince a man  
that God can give peace, joy, and love, I need to show  
him a man with peace, joy, and love.”*

John MacArthur

THE POWER OF  
A HOLY LIFE



John MacArthur

THE TRUE COST OF  
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP



John Cheeseman

IF I DENY CHRIST CAN I  
STILL GO TO HEAVEN?

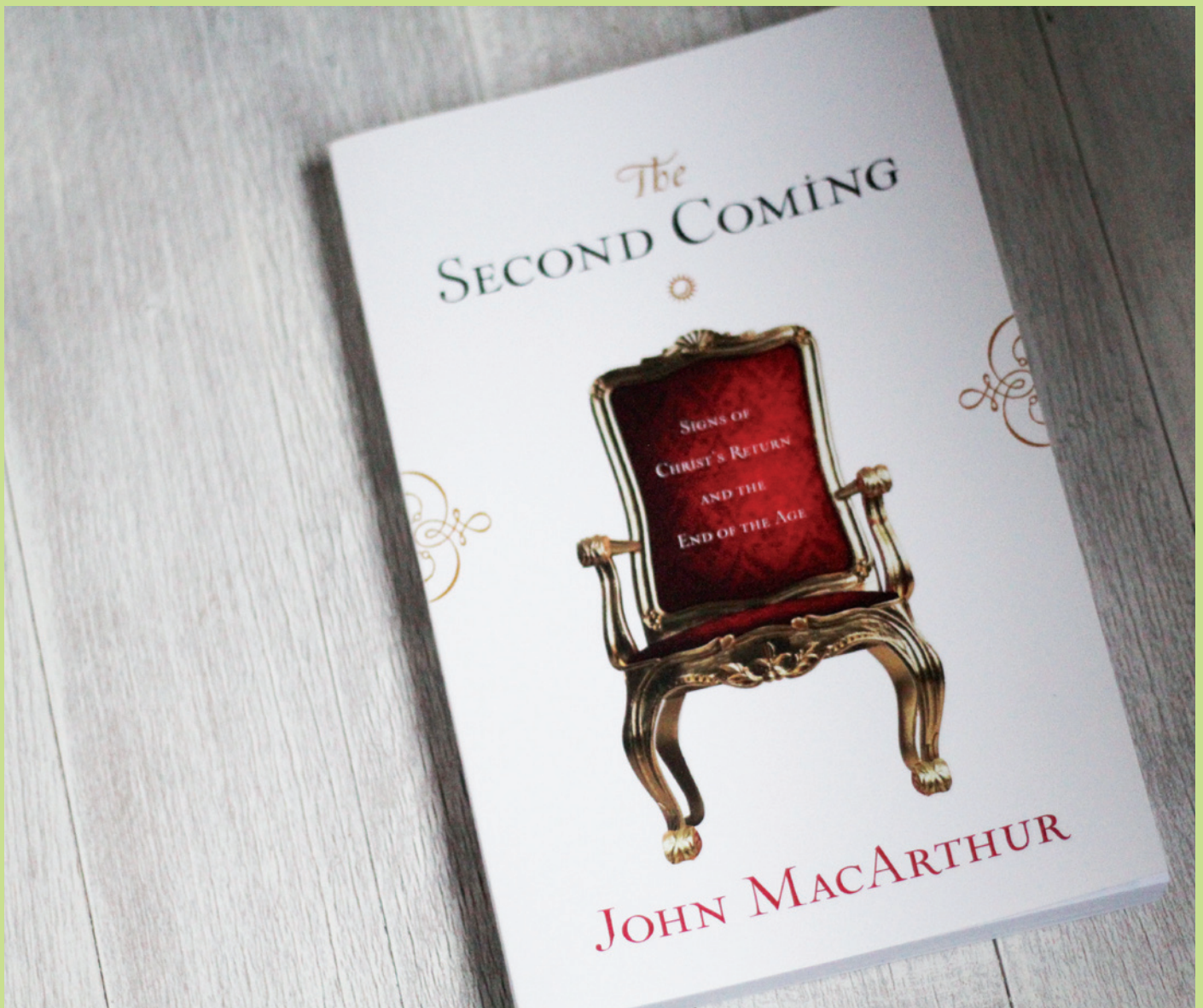


Jesse Johnson

5 MARKS OF HAVING  
RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT



George Whitefield



## The Second Coming

Jesus Christ was very clear: One day He will return—and none of us knows when. Vocal fanatics claim to know the details of the Second Coming, causing many Christians to all but ignore the good news that Jesus is coming again. Yet God's own Word commands us to know the signs of the times, to remain watchful, and to be ready – whenever Christ comes.

In *The Second Coming*, pastor and Bible teacher, John MacArthur, presents a straightforward, in-depth exploration of the key biblical texts regarding the Second Coming; most notably, Christ's longest and most important eschatological message, the Olivet Discourse. As you study what the Word of God says about these matters, it will stir in your heart an earnest longing for Christ's return—as well as a certainty about how to live expectantly until He comes again.

Softcover

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# THE POWER OF A *Holy Life*

By John MacArthur

Despite much technological advancement the 21st. Century has entered frighteningly dark waters. Look at the headlines: The threat of global terrorism, the chaos of unthinkable criminal activity, the defilement of pornography, the confusion of gender roles, the future of the economy, the “lostness” of our children, etc., etc. People are helplessly buckled up, strapped in, and holding on to a world careening out of control into a future of even greater fear, confusion, frustration, uncertainty, and isolation.

As a Christian, a true Christian, you are quite a contrast. Anchored in Jesus Christ, you are immovable, steadfast, and strong. Your eyes are fixed on the Word of God, a beacon that stands out like a “*lamp shining in a dark place*” (2 Peter 1:19). As you move toward that light, God changes your life by the power of the Holy Spirit. The message you proclaim, and the life you live, guarantees you will stand out in the sinful culture. Holy, righteous lives are the backbone of the gospel we preach. The apostle Paul understood that. In the midst of a pagan society that did all it could to persecute Christians and discredit the Christian faith, he wrote to Titus telling him how to instruct the Cretans “*to deny ungodliness*

*and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age*” (Titus 2:12).

As I’ve reflected on what Paul told Titus, I can see three compelling reasons we ought to live holy lives. And each reason has little to do with benefits that come from godly living, though there are benefits (cf. 1Timothy 6:6). Rather, Paul sets forth evangelism as the motive for holy living.

## *1. Holy Living Honours God’s Word*

In chapter two, Paul instructs Titus regarding different age groups in the church. The young women, he says, are to act in such a way “*so that the word of God may not be dishonoured*” (Titus 2:5). The Greek word translated “dishonoured” literally means “*blasphemed*.” We can’t allow unbelievers to mock, ignore, or totally reject God’s Word. Yet, how we live will directly affect how people feel about it.

No matter what their station in life, Christian men and women who are not what they ought to be will give people reason to blaspheme God's Word. The world doesn't judge us by our theology; it judges us by our behaviour. The validity of Scripture in the world's view is determined by how it affects us. If unbelievers see that our lives are truly transformed, separate and distinct from the world, they might conclude that Scripture is true, powerful, and life-changing.

The credibility of the Christian gospel is inseparably linked to the integrity of the lives of those who proclaim it. That's why it is so devastating when well-known evangelists or Christian leaders are caught in some gross sin or immorality. How do you think unbelievers react when they see such hypocrisy? They laugh at it, thus blaspheming God's Word and short-circuiting any opportunity we have to tell them about its power to transform their lives. The impact of the lives of men and women who bear the Lord's name is vital to the credibility of the faith and the effectiveness of personal witness and preaching. That's ultimately what is at stake in the way we live.

## 2. Holy Living Silences the Opposition

Paul's second reason for living holy lives gives us the heart of what he wants to communicate: *"so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us"* (Titus 2:8). The Greek word translated *"put to shame"* literally means *"to blush,"* emphasizing the opponent's utter embarrassment over having no just criticism.

Opponents of Christianity love to gloat when Christians cause a scandal. Don't you think some of the unbelievers in your sphere of influence would love to see you fail significantly so they can justify their unbelief? They don't want to see God transform your life as that would stand as a rebuke to their sinful lifestyles. But that's exactly what you want to do - you want to embarrass them when they criticize you because there is nothing for them to justifiably criticize.

The issue is evangelism. The proper strategy for our evangelization is not methodological. We reach the world

through epitomizing virtue, godliness, holiness, and a purity of life that makes our faith and God's Word believable.

The apostle Peter understood the way believers have impact on the godless world. He wrote, *"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behaviour excellent among the [pagans], so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Peter 2:11-12).

Do you see how imperative it is that we live godly lives? We want unbelievers to examine us. They come initially to criticize, but if our behaviour is excellent, the criticism of some might turn to curiosity. And if that curiosity turns to conversion, they'll glorify God because of their salvation. Thus we've done our part in bringing God glory. You lead people to the credibility of Christianity and ultimately to conversion by the virtue of your life. So stay away from fleshly lusts and maintain excellent behaviour.



### 3. Holy Living Makes the Gospel Attractive

Paul states his third reason for holy living in Titus 2:10, “That they will adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in every respect.” “Adorn” is from the Greek word *kosmeo* and refers to making something beautiful.

What is our primary message to this world about God? Do we want the world to know that God is omnipotent? Omniscient? Omnipresent? Immutable? Sovereign? Eternal? The Creator and the Sustainer of the universe? Yes, we do. But by far the main attribute of God we want the unsaved to understand is that He is a Saviour.

How will we ever make the good news about God as Saviour beautiful in every respect if we don't look like we've been saved? When we live in obedience to God, that in itself will be a testimony against wrong. When those around us see us helping rather than exploiting, hear us talking with purity instead of profanity, and observe us speaking truthfully rather than deceitfully, our example will itself be a rebuke of selfishness, unwholesome talk, and falsehood. Simply refusing to participate in a dishonest business or social practice will sometimes be such a strong rebuke that it costs us our job or friendship. Dishonesty is terribly uncomfortable in the presence of honesty, even when there is no verbal or other direct opposition.

Often, of course, open rebuke is necessary. Silent testimony will go only so far. Failure to speak out against and to oppose evil things in practical ways is a failure to obey God. Believers are to expose them in whatever legitimate, biblical ways are necessary.

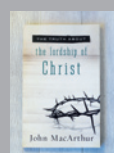
Unfortunately, many Christians are barely able to keep their own spiritual and moral houses in order. Thus they lack the discernment, inclination, or power to confront evil in the church or in society at large. That's why it is imperative that we be so mature in biblical truth, and in obedience, holiness, and love, that the natural course of our lives will be to expose, rebuke, and offer remedy for every kind of evil.

Making salvation attractive is a high calling, and we will fail in that endeavour unless we can demonstrate that we have indeed been delivered from sin. Rebuking sin in others without an accompanying lifestyle of righteousness is the greatest hypocrisy. But lives characterized by purity, power, and joy reflect the order, beauty, and power of a saving God. When we make salvation beautiful, we make God attractive. To convince a man God can save, I need to show him a man He saved. To convince a man that God can give hope, I need to show him a man with hope. To convince a man that God can give peace, joy, and love, I need to show him a man with peace, joy, and love. To convince a man that God can give complete, total, and utter satisfaction, I need to show him a satisfied man. When the world sees people who are holy, righteous, peaceful, joyful, and fulfilled, they see the evidence of God's transforming power.

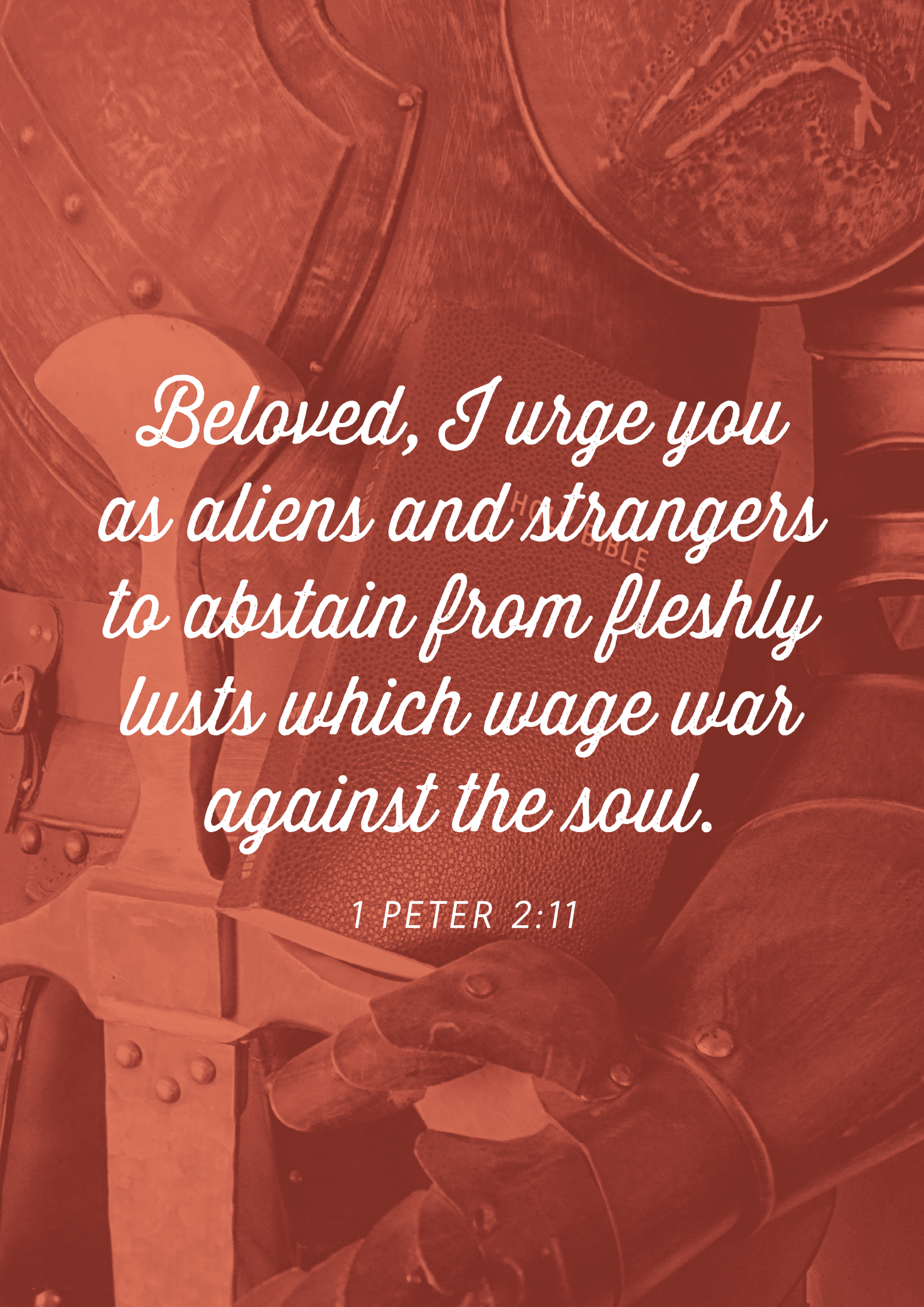
At stake is the eternal destiny of unredeemed souls. Christians who are unholy lead unbelievers to slander God; those who are holy lead them to glorify God. The central issue in evangelism is holy living. A powerful church is not built on its strategy, but on the virtue and holiness of its people. What we believe is linked to how we live, and how we live is directly linked to the effectiveness of our gospel proclamation.

So, Christian, it's imperative that you be “*blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world*” (Philippians 2:15).

#### Recommended Reading



**The Truth About the Lordship of Christ**  
See inside back cover for more details



*Beloved, I urge you  
as aliens and strangers  
to abstain from fleshly  
lusts which wage war  
against the soul.*

1 PETER 2:11



## THE TRUE COST OF CHRISTIAN

# *Discipleship*

*By John Cheeseman*

*'There's no such thing as a free lunch'* – This is a statement we hear from time to time. The point being made is that there's usually a cost involved in most aspects of life. In the academic world, for example, success will be an expensive business. It costs time, discipline and sheer hard work. The same principle is true of being a Christian. Someone has said that the entrance fee into the Kingdom of God is nothing ('nothing in my hand I bring'), but the annual subscription is the consecration of our whole lives to the Lord's service. (Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee'). In Matthew

16:24 Jesus spells out very clearly the cost of discipleship. 'If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' In this article we'll be examining from this verse the serious demands Jesus makes of all His would-be followers. Jesus never pretended it was an easy thing to be a Christian. If any preacher ever promises you an easy ride, such a person is a false prophet.

According to Jesus, the cost of Christian discipleship involves three principles.

# 1. Deny Ourselves

First, we must deny ourselves. This means saying 'no' to self and self-centredness – saying 'no' to all the selfish desires which, even for we Christians, can sometimes get the upper hand in our lives; for example, the love of money and material possessions; a desire for power, influence and popularity; love of pleasure, prestige and success; a desire to be the centre of attention; a hatred of criticism; a harbouring of grievances; greed, even resentment. The list is endless, and Jesus wants to cut out of our lives all those things which offend Him. The question is – are we prepared for Him to do so? It will be exceedingly painful. When you visit the dentist, he doesn't just deal with the one tooth which seems to be causing you a problem, he needs to thoroughly examine all your teeth, because what's causing a problem in one tooth will have the potential to become a problem in all the others too. Likewise, Jesus, will expose all those things in our lives which are wrong. He doesn't just want to address those sins which are causing us particular trouble, and of which we're ashamed. He wants to give us the full treatment. That's why He warned potential disciples to 'count the cost' before deciding to follow Him. What if Jesus starts to touch those areas which we'd rather He left alone? For example, the ways we spend our money, or the television programmes we choose to watch. Are we really prepared to allow Him to intrude into these very personal and private areas of our lives which we consider to be ours and ours alone?

Most of us have a bit of a King Herod mind-set about us. Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, was a double-minded man. One half of him liked to hear the truth about God, but the other half didn't like the moral implications of that truth. So when John the Baptist was in the maximum security wing of the palace, every now and then he'd be brought out of the dungeon to preach in the royal chapel. Now, Herod quite liked listening to the word of God, but the trouble was he was guilty of a wrong sexual relationship. Therefore, every time John was bold enough to address this issue (which was quite often!), the prophet was sent back to the dungeon (see Mark 6: 17-20).

Jesus once described in a parable our natural reaction to His Lordship over our lives: 'we will not have this man to reign over us' (Luke 19:14). Who wins when there's a clash of loyalties? As long as the standards of Jesus and our own desires are pointing in the same direction, there isn't a

problem. But what happens when they clash? It's relatively painless being a Christian when what Jesus wants is the same as what I want. But if Jesus wants me to do something that I don't want to do, there's the rub. '*Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*' said a young man whom Jesus loved (Luke 18:18). Here was someone who appeared to want to go God's way in his life. But when he was challenged about his love of money, he wasn't prepared to do the right thing. Sadly, there are many who when they're faced with the challenge of Christ, say: '*Of course, I want to follow you, Lord, but I didn't realize this would impinge upon my friendships, my marriage, my ambitions, my time and my money. No, Lord, not those things.*' Jesus said: '*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself.*'

# 2. Taking up a Cross

The second principle involves '*taking up a cross*'. The badge of Christian service is a cross, not a cushion. In other words, the Christian life contains suffering and sacrifice. For Jesus it was a life of facing opposition and ultimately crucifixion, and He said, '*a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*' (John 15:20). To be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ means we must expect to receive the same kind of treatment He received. He said: '*in the world you will have tribulation.*' (John 16:33). For some Christians in the world today, following Christ has literally led to crucifixion. Thank God, we haven't yet reached that situation in the Western world, but Christians are still being persecuted for their faith in Europe, where it seems that so often the Christian viewpoint is ignored and derided. As I write these words, a Christian preacher is in court, charged with stirring up hatred for making negative remarks about Islam. Maybe some of you are thinking – well, I haven't faced very much in the way of opposition and persecution. If so, it may be worth asking yourself this question: Do I avoid such suffering by compromise? Because if we keep quiet – if we don't take a stand for Christ and the teaching of the Bible - then we won't suffer. And this is one of the major problems with the Christian church in the West. So many Christians decide not to rock the boat. They don't want to be unpopular, and decide to mind their own business, so that no one is offended. The challenge of Jesus in this verse is to '*take up the cross*'. Are we prepared for that? Or do we prefer to be one of the '*carpet-slipper*' brigade, whose philosophy is '*anything for a quiet life*'?





### 3. Follow Jesus

The third principle is quite simply to *'follow Jesus'* - the principle of whole-hearted obedience in all things. The problem with many Christians is that their obedience to the Lord is only partial. They want to do enough of what God requires to soothe their consciences, but it's the remaining area of disobedience which reveals their true character. As someone has said, *'If Jesus isn't Lord of all; He isn't really Lord at all!'* I want to illustrate this by drawing your attention to a very sobering and challenging passage in the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel 15:3 God gave Saul a clear command through His servant Samuel to go and destroy the Amalekites - men, women, children and even animals. How did Saul respond to this command? Verse 9 tells us that he decided to destroy all that was worthless, but he kept all that was good. So here was a classic case of partial obedience to the word of God. What was God's response to this? *'The word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, 'I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments'* (verse 10). God considered Saul's partial obedience to be disobedience. Now, as far as Saul was concerned, he thought his partial obedience would satisfy God. He says to Samuel in verse 13, *'Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord.'* Saul looked upon his partial obedience as the essence

of obedience. But that's not how God saw it. Samuel says to Saul in verse 23, *'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.'* Saul's partial obedience was in reality rejection of the word of the Lord.

Many Christians tend to rationalize, like Saul, and they say to themselves, **'If God tells me to do six things and I do five, that's all that matters.'** They salve their consciences by conveniently doing the five, but it's the neglect of that demanding and costly sixth thing which reveals the true state of their hearts. That's why God says to Saul, *'you have rejected the word of the Lord';* not, *'you've done pretty well in obeying most of what I said.'* Being a Christian means following Jesus in whole-hearted obedience. In Ephesians 4:31 God says, *'Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, without malice,'* and we sometimes say, *'Lord, most of it, but not all if it! Surely I'm justified in keeping a little bit of bitterness in my heart for so and so, after all they've done to me?'* God says clearly in His word that we don't have a right to keep any bitterness in our hearts for anyone. We may think we need to put away all bitterness and malice from our friends at work, or our friends at church - otherwise they may not think well of us. But as for our spouses and children, they can put up with it! Who said so? God says in His word, *'Let all bitterness and wrath be put away.'* One of the greatest problems we face as Christians is this whole matter of partial obedience, which in the sight of God amounts to nothing less than out-and-out rebellion against His revealed will.

It was this complete obedience which the Lord Jesus gave to God the Father, and at times it cost Him dearly. In Gethsemane, for example, it cost Him to sweat drops of blood. Some people have the foolish idea that if you simply *'abide in Christ'*, you'll find it easy to obey God. But if there was ever anyone who abode in a perfect relationship with the Father, it was the sinless Son of God, and yet, doing the will of the Father brought Jesus into the deepest agony that anyone has ever experienced.

Similarly there will be occasions in our Christian lives when we'll face some personal Gethsemane. There'll be times when to give complete obedience to the Father will cost us dearly. It may cost us close friends and even relatives. That's why Jesus said, *'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me'* (Matthew 10:37). If there's a choice

between submitting to a parent in opposition to obeying Christ, then the parent's wish, no matter how earnest, must be rejected. Similarly if there's a choice between indulging a child or obeying Christ, the child's appeal, no matter how emotive, must be overruled. Complete obedience to Christ will cost us in terms of lusts, pleasures and appetites which are as dear to us as eyes and hands, and Jesus says we must take the matter of sin extremely seriously indeed if we want to eradicate its dreadful consequences from our lives (Matthew 5:27-30, 18:7-9, Mark 9:43-47).

Some of you reading these words may be thinking – all this is too much. The cost of following Christ is too great. Is it really worth it? That would be a natural reaction to the teaching of Matthew 16:24. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes on in the next verse to talk about the rewards of being a Christian, because although the demands of following Christ are very costly, the rewards far outweigh the cost. In verse 25 Jesus says, *'Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, will find it.'* In other words, if we cling onto a sinful, self-centred way of life, we'll miss out on all God's blessings. Selfishness and disobedience to the word of God do not lead to happiness and fulfilment. In fact they lead to the very opposite – frustration, disappointment and disillusionment. If on the other hand we say 'no' to sin and self, and 'yes' to Jesus, that's the pathway to real joy, peace and purpose. The way of Christian obedience is always the way of God's richest blessing.

I'm sure many of us will have found this to be true in our own experience. In terms of finance, for example, when we've obeyed the Biblical principles of giving and we've given to God a sacrificial portion of our income, did we lose out? Of course not! Although it seemed a very costly thing to do, God made sure that all our material needs were met. We proved the truth of Matthew 6:33 *'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.'* God is no man's debtor. Or maybe it's a cold mid-week evening in the middle of winter, and you think to yourself, 'I can't be bothered to go to the Bible study and prayer meeting

tonight. I'd much rather stay at home in the warm and watch a film on TV.' But in the end you do make the effort to go and what happens? God really speaks to you and blesses you in a marvellous way and you're pleased you went.

This is one of the master keys of living the Christian life. It was well expressed in the old chorus, *'Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.'* If we put God first in our lives, although it may sometimes be costly and difficult, God will bless us far more abundantly than we could ever have imagined. At the age of 22, Jim Elliot, who seven years later was martyred by the Auca Indians in South America, wrote these famous words:

*'He is no fool,  
who gives what  
he cannot keep,  
to gain what he  
cannot lose.'*

Any worthwhile project is costly. Any worthwhile leader demands high standards from his followers. But think of the alternative – what is the cost of not following Christ? Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:26, *'What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul.'*

Surely we should be willing to give up anything and everything which stands between us and a place in heaven? But above all, shouldn't a professed love for the Lord Jesus be authenticated by actual love demonstrated by obedience to His word? (John 14:15). A mere profession of love is worthless if it isn't actually backed-up by a daily denial of self and a carrying of our own cross in imitation of Christ.

## *Recommended Reading*



### **Hard to Believe**

**See inside back cover for more details**



If I...

# Deny Christ

...can I still go to heaven?

By Jesse Johnson

I was recently leading a Q&A session with our church youth group and one of the young people asked this question:

In light of the shooting in Oregon, where the gunman asked students if they were Christian, and if they said ‘yes’ the gunman shot the student in the head, what would happen if a Christian lied? What if it would have been me, and I would have said ‘no’? Would I still go to heaven when I die?

This question is of particular importance because Christianity contains no exception to prohibitions against lying. Islam, for example, has a doctrine called Taqiyya, which allows a

Muslim to temporarily deny his faith if his life is in danger—so long as it is not a “*heartfelt*” objection.

But Christianity is different. In fact, martyrdom is one of the chief means of propagating the gospel. As people boldly stand for Christ and refuse to recant even in the face of death, the gospel message is strengthened. The gospel itself is an example of this. Jesus valued his mission from God as more important than his own life, and his followers ought to do likewise.

And yet... many Christians have denied Jesus when faced

with persecution. The most obvious example of this is Peter—he denied Jesus three times, yet Jesus directly told him that he was still a follower of Christ (John 21:19). So on the one hand, the heart of the gospel is a truth worth dying for (as evidenced by Jesus and most of the Apostles), but on the other hand the gospel offers forgiveness even to those who deny Christ.

This is potentially confusing because of 2 Timothy 2:12: *“If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”*

But the denial in this verse is not talking about the momentary denial like Peter, or like a student scared for his life in the face of a gunman. That denial references the absolute walking away from the faith - apostasy. And in that case, there is no salvation!

This verse seems so drastic, and that is the point. Paul—himself facing martyrdom (4:6) challenges his readers to persevere. But Paul does not want true believers to lose heart, and so he immediately follows verse 12 with:

*“If we are  
faithless,  
He remains  
faithful,  
for He  
cannot deny  
Himself”*

2 Timothy 2:13

There will always be moments where we lose faith, but for those who are in Christ, we should have confidence that while we may lose faith, Jesus may never lose us. Even if we momentarily are gripped by fear, and value our lives more than the life of Christ, Jesus still possesses us, and he cannot deny himself.

But if we are being honest with ourselves, we know this. We know that if the gunman were to point his gun at us, we should say that we are Christians, and so boldly proclaim the gospel even in the face of death. But we also don't know what we would do. Would we have the strength to do what we ought?

And this is where the promises of the Bible really come alive. Jesus tells us that the time will come when Christians will be delivered over to die, and in the meantime we should *“not worry about what you are to say, for it will be given to you in that hour”* (Matthew 10:19).

In other words, God doesn't give us the grace or the wisdom to bravely face martyrdom until the moment when we need that grace. It doesn't come in advance, but rather at the moment.

So if you don't feel like you would face death well, then don't worry (Jesus literally forbids it!). Instead, strive to grow in your faith and courage, knowing that if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

**Jesse Johnson served with John MacArthur on staff at Grace Community Church but is now Teaching Pastor at Immanuel Bible Church in Springfield, Virginia.**

## *Recommended Reading*



**Drawing Near Devotional Bible**

*See inside back cover for more details*

## 5 MARKS OF HAVING RECEIVED THE

# Holy Spirit

*By George Whitefield (1714 - 1770)*

This blessed Spirit, who once moved on the face of the great deep; who over-shadowed the blessed Virgin before that holy child was born of her; who descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, on our blessed Lord, when he came up out of the water at his baptism; and afterwards came down in fiery tongues on the heads of all his Apostles at the day of Pentecost: this is the Holy Ghost, who must move on the faces of our souls; this power of the Most High, must come upon us, and we must be baptized with his baptism and refining fire, before we can be styled true members of Christs' mystical body.

Thus says the Apostle Paul, "*Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, (that is, by his Spirit) unless you are reprobates?*" And, "*If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,*" And again, says St. John, "*We know that we are his, by the Spirit that he hath given us.*"

It is not, indeed, necessary that we should have the Spirit now given in that miraculous manner, in which he was at first given to our Lord's Apostles, by signs and wonders, but it is

absolutely necessary, that we should receive the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying graces, as really as they did: and so will it continue to be till the end of the world.

For this stands the case between God and man: God at first made man upright, or as the sacred Penman expresses it, "*In the image of God made he man;*" that is, his soul was the very copy, the transcript of the divine nature. He, who before, by his almighty fiat, spoke the world into being, breathed into man the breath of spiritual life, and his soul was adorned with a resemblance of the perfections of Deity. This was the finishing stroke of the creation: the perfection both of the moral and material world. And so near did man resemble his divine Original, that God could not but rejoice and take pleasure in his own likeness: And therefore we read, that when God had finished the inanimate and brutish part of the creation, he looked upon it, and beheld it was good; but when that lovely, God-like creature man was made, behold it was very good.

Happy, unspeakably happy must man needs be, when thus a partaker of the divine nature. And thus might he have still continued, had he continued holy. But God placed him in a state of probation, with a free grant to eat of every tree in the garden of Eden, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil: the day he should eat thereof, he was surely to die; that is, not only to be subject to temporal, but spiritual death; and consequently, to lose that divine image, that spiritual life God had not long since breathed into him, and which was as much his happiness as his glory.

These, one would imagine, were easy conditions for a finite creature's happiness to depend on. But man, unhappy man, being seduced by the devil, and desiring, like him, to be equal with his Maker, did eat of the forbidden fruit; and thereby became liable to that curse, which the eternal God, who cannot lie, had denounced against his disobedience. Accordingly we read, that soon after Adam had fallen, he complained that he was naked; naked, not only as to his body, but naked and destitute of those divine graces which, before decked and beautified his soul. The unhappy mutiny, and disorder which the visible creation fell into, the briars and thorns which not sprung up and overspread the earth, were but poor emblems, lifeless representations of that confusion and rebellion, and those divers lusts and passions which sprung up in, and quite overwhelmed the soul of man immediately after the fall. Alas! He was now no longer the image of the invisible God; but as he had imitated the devil's sin, he became as it were a partaker of the devil's nature, and from a union with, sunk into a state of direct enmity against God.

Now in this dreadful disordered condition, are all of us brought into the world: for as the root is, such must the branches be. Accordingly we are told, *"That Adam beget a son in his own likeness;"* or, with the same corrupt nature which he himself had, after he had eaten the forbidden fruit. And experience as well as scripture proves that we also are altogether born in sin and corruption; and therefore incapable, whilst in such a state, to whole communion with God. For as light cannot have communion with darkness, so God can have no communion with such polluted sons of Belial. Here then appears the end and design why Christ was manifest in the flesh; to put an end to these disorders, and to restore us to that primitive dignity in which we were at first created. Accordingly he shed his precious blood to satisfy his Father's justice for our sins; and thereby also he procured for us the Holy Ghost, who should once more re-stamp the divine image upon our hearts, and

make us capable of living with and enjoying the blessed God. This was the great end of our Lord's coming into the world; nay, this is the only end why the world itself is now kept in being. For as soon as a sufficient number are sanctified out of it, the heavens shall be wrapped up like a scroll, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, and all that therein is, shall be burnt up.

This sanctification of the Spirit is that new birth mentioned by our blessed Lord to Nicodemus, *"Without which we cannot see the kingdom of God."* This is what St. Paul calls being *"renewed in the spirit of our minds;"* and it is the spring of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Thus then, it is undeniably certain, we must receive the Holy Ghost ere we can be styled true members of Christ's mystical body. At this point I would lay down some scriptural marks, whereby we may easily judge, whether we have thus received the Holy Ghost or not.

## 1. *A Spirit of Prayer and Supplication*

And the First I shall mention, is, our having received a spirit of prayer and supplication; for that always accompanies the spirit of grace. No sooner was Paul converted, but *"behold he prayeth."* And this was urged as an argument, to convince Ananias that he was converted. And God's elect are also said to *"cry to him day and night."* And since one great work of the Holy Spirit is to convince us of sin, and to set us upon seeking pardon and renewing grace, through the all-sufficient merits of a crucified Redeemer, whosoever has felt the power of the world to come, awakening him from his spiritual lethargy, cannot but be always crying out, *"Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"* Or, in the language of the importunate blind Bartimeus, *"Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me."*

The blessed Jesus, as he received the Holy Ghost without measure, so he evidenced it by nothing more, than his frequent addresses at the throne of grace. Accordingly we read, that he was often alone on the mountain praying; that he rose a great while before day to pray: nay, that he spent whole nights in prayer. And whosoever is made partaker of the same Spirit as the holy Jesus, will be of the same mind, and delight in nothing so much as to *"draw nigh unto God,"* and lift up holy hands and hearts in frequent and devout prayer. It must be confessed, indeed, that this spirit of supplication

is often as it were sensibly lost, and decays, for some time, even in those who have actually received the Holy Ghost. Through spiritual dryness and barrenness of soul, they find in themselves a listlessness and backwardness to this duty of prayer; but then they esteem it as their cross, and still persevere in seeking Jesus, though it be sorrowing: and their hearts, notwithstanding, are fixed upon God, though they cannot exert their affections so strongly as usual, on account of that spiritual deadness, which God, for wise reasons, has suffered to benumb their souls.



But as for the formal believer, it is not so with him: no; he either prays not at all, or if he does enter into his closet, it is with reluctance, out of custom, or to satisfy the checks of his conscience. Whereas, the true believer can no more live without prayer, than without food day by day. And he finds his soul as really and perceptibly fed by the one, as his body is nourished and supported by the other.

## 2. Not Committing Sin

A Second scripture mark of our having received the Holy Ghost, is, NOT committing sin.

*“Whosoever is born of God, (says St. John) sinneth not, neither can he sin, because his seed remaineth in him.”* Neither can he sin. This expression does not imply the impossibility of

a Christian’s sinning: for we are told, that *“in many things we offend all:”* It only means thus much: that a man who is really born again of God, doth not willfully commit sin, much less live in the habitual practice of it. For how shall he that is dead to sin, as every converted person is, live any longer therein?

It is true, a man that is born again of God, may, through surprise, or the violence of a temptation, fall into an act of sin: witness the adultery of David, and Peter’s denial of his Master. But then, like them, he quickly rises again, goes out from the world, and weeps bitterly; washes the guilt of sin away by the tears of sincere repentance, joined with faith in the blood of Jesus Christ; takes double heed to his ways for the future, and perfects holiness in the fear of God.

The meaning of this expression of the Apostle, that *“a man who is born of God, cannot commit sin,”* has been fitly illustrated, by the example of a covetous worldling, to the general bent of whose inclinations, liberality and profuseness are directly opposite: but if, upon some unexpected, sudden occasion, he does play the prodigal, he immediately repents him of his fault, and returns with double care to his father’s house again. And so is every one that is born again: to commit sin, is as contrary to the habitual frame and tendency of his mind, as generosity is to the inclinations of a miser; but if at any time, he is drawn into sin, he immediately, with double zeal, returns to his duty, and brings forth fruits meet for repentance. Whereas, the unconverted sinner is quite dead in trespasses and sins: or if he does abstain from gross acts of it, through worldly selfish motives, yet, there is some right eye he will not pluck out; some right-hand which he will not cut off; some specious Agag that he will not sacrifice for God; and thereby he is convinced that he is but a mere Saul: and consequently, whatever pretensions he may make to the contrary, he has not yet received the Holy Ghost.

## 3. Conquest Over The World

A Third mark whereby we may know, whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost, is our conquest over the world. *“For whosoever is born of God, (says the Apostle) overcometh the world.”* By the world, we are to understand, as St. John expressed it, *“all that is in the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life:”* And by overcoming of it, is meant, our renouncing these, so as not to follow or be led

by them: for whosoever is born from above, has his affections set on things above: he feels a divine attraction in his soul, which forcibly draws his mind heavenwards; and as the deer panteth after the water-brooks, so doth it make his soul so long after the enjoyment of his God. Not that he is so taken up with the affairs of another life, as to neglect the business of this: No; a truly spiritual man dares not stand any day idle; but then he takes care, though he laboureth for the meat which perisheth, first to secure that which endureth to everlasting life. Or, if God has exalted him above his brethren, yet, like Moses, Joseph, and Daniel, he, notwithstanding, looks upon himself as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth: having received a principle of new life, he walks by faith and not by sight; and his hopes being full of immortality, he can look on all things here below as vanity and vexation of spirit: In short, though he is in, yet he is not of the world; and as he was made for the enjoyment of God, so nothing but God can satisfy his soul.

The ever-blessed Jesus was a perfect instance of overcoming the world. For though he went about continually doing good, and always lived as in a press and throng; yet, wherever he was, his conversation tended heavenwards. In like manner, he that is joined to the Lord in one spirit will so order his thoughts, words, and actions, that he will evidence to all, that his conversation is in heaven. On the contrary, an unconverted man being of the earth is earthy; and having no spiritual eye to discern spiritual things, he is always seeking for happiness in this life, where it never was, will, or can be found. Being not born again from above, he is bowed down by a spirit of natural infirmity: the serpent's curse becomes his choice, and he eats of the dust of the earth all the days of his life.

## 4. *Loving One Another*

A Fourth scripture mark of our having received the Holy Ghost, is, our loving one another. *"We know (says St. John) we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."* *"And by this (says Christ himself) shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another."* Love is the fulfilling of the gospel, as well as of the law: for *"God is love; and whosoever dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God."*

But by this love we are not to understand a softness and tenderness of mere nature, or a love founded on worldly motives (for this a natural man may have); but a love of our brethren, proceeding from love towards God: loving all men in general, because to their relation to God; and loving good men in particular, for the grace we see in them, and because they love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. This is Christian charity, and that new commandment which Christ gave to his disciples. New, not in its object, but in the motive and example whereon it is founded, even Jesus Christ. This is that love which the primitive Christians were so renowned for, that it became a proverb, *"See how these Christians love one another"*. And without this love, though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burnt, it would profit us nothing.

Further, this love is not confined to any particular set of men, but is impartial and universal: A love that embraces God's image wherever it beholds it and that delights in nothing so much as to see Christ's kingdom come. This is the love wherewith Jesus Christ loved mankind: He loved all, even the worst of men, as appears by his weeping over the obstinately

*In him you also, when you heard  
the word of truth, the gospel of your  
salvation, and believed in him, were sealed  
with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the  
guarantee of our inheritance*

Ephesians 1:13-14



perverse; but wherever he saw the least appearance of the divine likeness, that soul he loved in particular. Thus we read, that when he heard the young man say, *“All these things have I kept from my youth,”* that so far he loved him. And when he saw any noble instance of faith, though in a Centurion and a Syrophonecian, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, how is he said to marvel at, to rejoice in, speak of, and commend it? So every spiritual disciple of Jesus Christ will cordially embrace all who worship God in spirit and in truth, however they may differ as to the appendages of religion, and in things not essentially necessary to salvation. I confess, indeed, that the heart of a natural man is not thus enlarged all at once; and a person may really have received the Holy Ghost, (as Peter, no doubt, had when he was unwilling to go to Cornelius) though he be not arrived to this: but then, where a person is truly in Christ, all narrowness of spirit decreases in him daily; the partition wall of bigotry and party zeal is broken down more and more; and the nearer he comes to heaven, the more his heart is enlarged with that love, which there will make no difference between any people, nation, or language, but we shall all, with one heart, and one voice, sing praises to him that sitteth upon the throne forever.

## 5. *Loving Our Enemies*

But I hasten to a Fifth scripture mark: Loving our enemies. *“I say unto you, (says Jesus Christ) love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.”* And this duty of loving your enemies is so necessary, that without it, our righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, or even of Publicans and sinners: *“For if you do good to them only, who do good to you, what do you do more than others?”* What do you do that’s in anyway extraordinary? *“Do not even the Publicans do the same?”* And these precepts our Lord confirmed by his own example; when he wept over the bloody city; when he suffered himself to be led as a sheep to the slaughter; when he made that mild reply to the traitor Judas, *“Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”* and more especially, when in the agonies and

pangs of death, he prayed for his very murderers, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

This is a difficult duty to the natural man; but whosoever is made partaker of the promise of the Spirit, will find it practicable and easy: for if we are born again of God, we must be like him, and consequently delight to be perfect in this duty of doing good to our worst enemies in the same manner, though not in the same degree as he is perfect: He sends his rain on the evil and the good; causeth his sun to shine on the just and unjust; and more especially commended his love towards us, that whilst we were his enemies, he sent forth his Son, born of a woman, made under the law, that he might become a curse for us.

Many other marks are scattered up and down the scriptures, whereby we may know whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost: such as, *“to be carnally minded, is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* *“Now the fruits of the Spirit are joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness,”* with a multitude of texts to the same purpose. But as most, if not all of them, are comprehended in the duties already laid down, I dare affirm, whosoever upon an impartial examination, can find the aforesaid marks on his soul, may be as certain, as though an angel was to tell him, that his pardon is sealed in heaven.

As for my own part, I had rather see these divine graces, and this heavenly temper stamped upon my soul, than to hear an angel from heaven saying unto me, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. These are infallible witnesses; these are Emmanuel, God with and in us; these make up that white stone, which none knoweth, saving he who hath receiveth it; these are the earnest of the heavenly inheritance in our hearts: In short, these are glory begun, and are that good thing, that better part, and which if you continue to stir up this gift of God, neither men nor devils shall ever be able to take from you.

This article has been adapted from George Whitefield’s sermon, *“Marks of Having Received the Holy Ghost”* based on Acts 19:2.

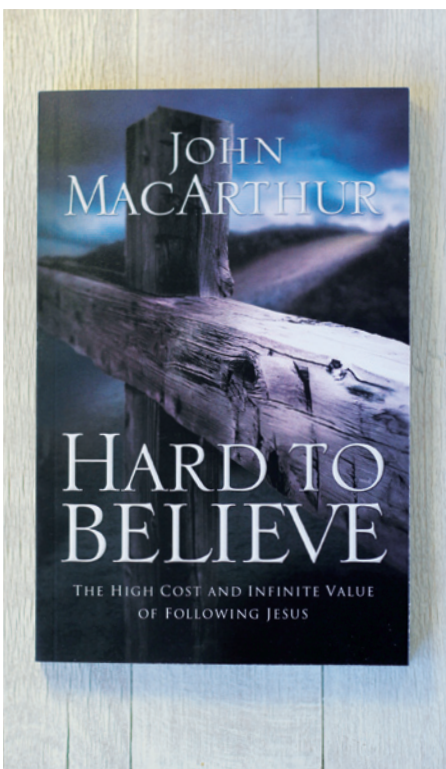
### *Recommended Reading*



## **The Silent Shepherd**

**See inside back cover for more details**

# Recommended Reading



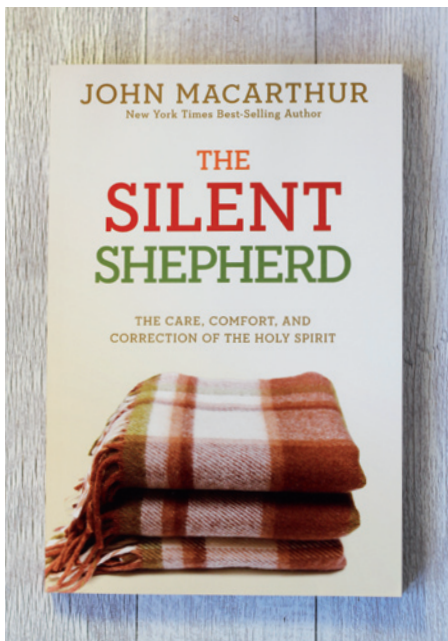
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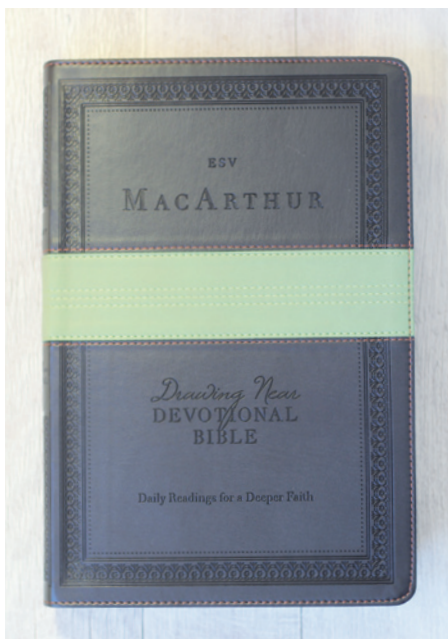
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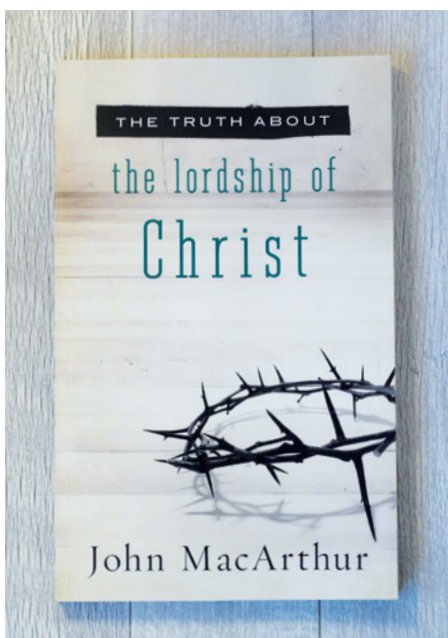
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